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The Qaddafi Watch

Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, that hardened plotter of coups and bankroller of international terrorist groups, wants to become respectable. U.S. intelligence sources have been tracking his PR efforts with a mixture of amusement and incredulity.

They note, for example, that a few months ago he dropped into Rabat on a "courtesy call" on Moroccan King Hassan, whom Qaddafi had publicly vilified a year earlier. According to secret intelligence cables, Hassan didn't buy Qaddafi's new act. In fact, U.S. diplomats were told confidentially that the king concluded that Qaddafi was crazier than ever.

It's undeniable that the Libyan's chosen method of high-level diplomacy is a bit eccentric. More often than not, he simply flies into a country without notice, like visiting in-laws on summer vacation trips.

Qaddafi's retinue on these trips is a sight to behold. His bodyguards are beautiful young women dressed in high-fashion, coordinated outfits. His fleet of jets carries several BMW limousines. When Qaddafi arrives at his destination, the BMWs are rolled out and the Libyan strongman gets behind the wheel of one and drives off, his imperial caravan trailing behind.

Once ensconced in comfort, Qaddafi astonishes his hosts by changing costumes as often as eight times a day.

Though the comic-opera aspects of the Libyan's style give our Qaddafi-watchers a few laughs, they are not amused by the deadly serious activities that go on behind his flamboyant facade. With his commitment to Islamic revolution and his oil billions to support adventures abroad, he remains a threat to governments all over the world.

From a number of intelligence sources, my associate, Lucette Lagnado, has compiled a rundown of the various guerrilla and terrorist groups supported by Qaddafi:

- *Eastern Caribbean:* Qaddafi supplied some of the money for the controversial airport the Marxist regime on Grenada was building with Cuban workers. He also set up a large "people's bureau"—the Libyan equivalent of an embassy—in St. George's, and used it as a distribution center for funds to leftist groups on other islands.

- *Lebanon:* There are several hundred Libyan troops there, and Qaddafi recently put them directly under command of the Syrians. He is bitterly opposed to the presence of U.S. and European peacekeeping forces, and his agents are believed to be cooperating with Iranian terrorists in Lebanon.

- *Jordan:* Earlier this year, a Libyan diplomat in Amman defected and told Western in-

telligence agents of a Qaddafi plot—never carried out—to assassinate King Hussein. The plan was to shoot down the king's plane with missiles. The timing of the plot suggests it was intended to prevent Hussein from supporting President Reagan's Middle East peace plan.

- *Sudan:* Qaddafi has long been the guiding force behind insurgents trying to topple the pro-Western regime of President Gaafar Nimeiri.

- *Italy:* For years Qaddafi has been training and supplying terrorists in Italy. Recently he jolted the Italian government by threatening to bomb southern Italy to protest deployment of U.S. Pershing missiles there.

- *Chad:* There are perhaps 5,500 Libyan troops occupying the northern part of this former French colony on Libya's southern border. But Qaddafi's open aggression in Chad has proven to be counter-productive. It prompted France to send in troops, and Libya's intervention in Chad is perhaps the single most important reason Qaddafi is so deeply mistrusted by most African leaders.

- *Nicaragua:* Libya's role as a major supplier of arms to the leftist regime was exposed a few months ago when an arms shipment was intercepted during a stopover in Brazil.

- *Elsewhere in Central America:* Revolutionary cadres from El Salvador and other countries in the region are constantly being flown in small groups to Libya, where special training camps have been set up to teach them the deadly art of guerrilla warfare.

Far from mellowing with age and becoming more moderate, the 41-year-old Libyan dictator is still pursuing his dream of Islamic revolution with a zeal and violence rivaled only by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini.

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